

(Washington, DC) Last night, Congressman Alcee L. Hastings (D-Miramar) introduced a resolution urging the Government of Canada to end the commercial seal hunt.

(Please find attached a copy of the legislation)

“While the vast majority of countries have banned the commercial seal hunt long ago, Canada is by far the largest remaining seal killer in the world. The commercial seal hunt is not only unnecessary but cruel. Ninety-seven percent of the seals killed are pups between twelve days and twelve weeks of age, without any ability to defend themselves. They are either shot or struck on the head by a hakapik or club. Many are injured in the course of the hunt and escape beneath the ice where they die slowly and are never recovered. Seal pups can also be skinned while still alive,” said Hastings.

Each year, about 300,000 harp seal pups are killed for their meat, oil and pelts and almost exclusively traded internationally. The United States and the European Union have banned both the hunting of seals and the importation of any seal products. In recent years, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans of Canada has authorized historically high quotas for harp seals despite high pup mortality, low seal fur prices and reduced industry participation.

“Several reports concluded that avoidable suffering occurs during hunting, sealers fail to comply with regulations and authorities do not effectively monitor the hunt and enforce regulations. Polling has shown that the majority of people in Canada oppose the commercial seal hunt and support foreign nations' ending their trade in seal products. A recent poll even reveals that half of Newfoundland sealers support a federal buyout of the commercial sealing industry,” further noted Hastings.

Hastings' resolution will urge the Government of Canada to prohibit the commercial hunting of seals, while allowing subsistence hunting for aboriginal communities. It will also encourage other countries to ban trade in seal products.

“This slaughter has to come to an end. Wild animals are a very important part of our commonly

held natural resources and contribute to the diversity and stability of our environment. We cannot let economic interests take over our moral values. Animal cruelty is an inexcusable abomination. The United States must continue to protect those animals that cannot protect themselves and ensure fair and humane treatment.”

Joining Hastings as original co-sponsors of the legislation include: *Representatives Eni F. H. Faleomavaega, Shelley Berkley, Lynn Woolsey, Barbara Lee, Phil Hare, Jackie Speier, Mazie Hirono, Howard L. Berman, Sam Farr, Raúl Grijalva, Robert Andrews, Jared Polis, and Pete Stark.*

Endorsing organizations: *The Animal Welfare Institute and PETA.*

Congressman Alcee L. Hastings is Vice Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, a senior member of the House Rules Committee, and Co-Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

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